Milton, Shakespeare and eccentric ex-pats

Ah, those byacinth days at the English Department, early 1990’s, getting a whiff of New England in the Naftali building; it was like going through the rabbit hole. One minute you’d be out in the street, assaulted by the simple fact of living here, the next - you’d be discussing Milton and Shakespeare with an eccentric lot of ex-pats.

It was Prof. Brian McHale who got me into Freud, and the incomparable Prof. Zefira Porat, with her intoxicating colloquy, who introduced me to Nietzsche.

I remember the day Prof. Bob Griffin made me cry. Then he gave me an award, though I’m not sure it was for best crying. But in all of those bright days, in these peoples’ company, I was temporarily salvaged from my Israeli-ness, exiled into ineffable realms where even the lawn smelled like Blake’s Jerusalem.

Shahenaz Kenan is a columnist who is currently working on her PhD in philosophy at EGS, Switzerland. She is the daughter of Amos Kenan, the well-known artist and columnist for Yediot Aharanot, who won the Brenner Prize in 1999.

Singing and translating

For the love of scholarship

For me, one of the greatest thing about TAU’s English Department is that it manages to follow North American standards of scholarship (for the most part), which places it in a rather superior position in comparison to other departments in the humanities. This, I believe, is the result of the simple fact that its teaching faculty was either educated in or is somehow related to North American institutions and scholars.

At the same time, however, TAU’s English Department still favors real scholarship over professionalism, sadly, the reverse is true for most North American schools.

Thus, while North American students are actually encouraged to pursue projects that will make them appealing to the job market, English students at TAU are given much more academic freedom; this really allows them to go where no one has gone before.

Who are our faculty?

The faculty members of the English Department are well known in Israel and abroad as serious scholars and leaders in their fields. Their impressive biographies, to be found on the web (tau.ac.il/humanities/english/faculty.html), reflect both the level and diversity of studies. The professors and teachers have written scholarly books that have been published by the most prestigious presses and articles that participate in the current academic dialogue, and they regularly participate in conferences and seminars in their field in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and Europe. Subjects of current and forthcoming books include the Modern Urban Novel, Masculinity, Writing about Violence, Poetry and Popular Culture, Anonymity, and Subjectivity and the Sacred. The results of this emphasis on research are current and relevant lectures to undergraduate and graduate students, lectures and seminars which prepare them not only for their own independent further enjoyment of literature and culture, but also for current discussion in Israel and abroad.

Although we do not offer a program in Creative Writing, we provide a free no-credit creative writing workshop to students of the English Department, which offers a variety of intellectually challenging courses and seminars. Courses as basic as Shakespeare, Yeats, Romantic Poetry, Renaissance Literature, Modern Drama, Milton and Jewish-American Literature are offered alongside experimental and diverse choices such as Photography and Literature, Post-Colonial Literature, Poetry and Popular Culture, and Literature of the Body.

For the love of scholarship

Finding their way

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College life at TAU

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The curriculum in the English Department is frequently enriched with guest lecturers and international conferences here. The department has co-sponsored several conferences, including “Auto/biography in American Literature” and “Culture and Knowledge, Power and Society.” Guest lecturers have included a vast range of scholars and writers including novelist Gish Jen, Jamaica Kincaid and former Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky, and critics Jeremy McGann, Susan Gubar, Walter Benn Michaels, J. Hillis Miller and Marjorie Perloff. Next year we will be hosting Amitav Ghosh, one of the most widely known Indians writing in English today, whose most recent book is “The Glass Palace.”

What do we study?

Because we believe in the necessity of a classic, canonical curriculum as well as diverse alternatives, we offer a variety of intellectually challenging courses and seminars. Courses as basic as Shakespeare, Yeats, Romantic Poetry, Renaissance Literature, Modern Drama, Milton and Jewish-American Literature are offered alongside experimental and diverse choices such as Photography and Literature, Post-Colonial Literature, Poetry and Popular Culture, and Literature of the Body.

Brenner Prize

Sharon Meltavi is an Israeli rock singer and lyricist/composer.